



**Michael G. Watters, Senior Partner**

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Michael G. Watters is the firm's senior litigation partner as well as the firm's Administrative Partner. He was born on April 20, 1945, in Richland, Washington. Mr. Watters specializes in all aspects of trial work, with emphases on complex civil litigation, business litigation, employment litigation, family law, insurance defense including professional liability, and alternative dispute resolution (ADR). He also defends professional licenses. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with emphases in managerial economics and accounting in 1967 from the University of California at Berkeley. He then attended its Graduate School of Business Administration (now the Haas School) and earned an M.B.A. degree in 1968. Mr. Watters then served as a U.S. Marine Corps officer on active duty from 1969 to 1971, with tours of duty on Okinawa and in Vietnam. He was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V." He remained in the Marine Corps Reserve for 20 years, retiring in 1991. In 1990 he was called to active duty in support of Operation Desert Shield. Following his release from active duty in 1971, he attended Hastings College of the Law, University of California, graduating with a J.D. in 1974. He then moved to Santa Rosa and was an associate with Spridgen, Barrett, Achor, Luckhardt, Anderson, James & Zeigler, becoming a partner in 1980. In 1982, just prior to that firm's dissolution, he founded this firm along with Laurence K. Sawyer, a Sonoma County Superior Court Judge since 1985, and Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. Watters is a member of the State Bar of California and the Sonoma County, Marin County, Napa County, and American Bar Associations. Since 1979, he has been an Arbitrator for the Sonoma, Marin, and Napa County Superior Courts and has been a Superior and Municipal Court Judge (Pro Tem). He also sits as a Mandatory Settlement Conference Panelist for the Sonoma and Marin County Courts. He has also been appointed from time to time as a Special Master and a Discovery Referee by the Sonoma County Superior Court. Mr. Watters has been active in ADR. He was a Mediator as well as an Arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association for many years. Mr. Watters is a member of the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR).

Mr. Watters is a veteran of numerous Superior Court jury trials and a number of administrative law proceedings. He has tried cases in Sonoma, Marin, Napa, Mendocino, San Francisco, Alameda and Orange Counties. He has represented clients in hearings before the

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Board of Medical Quality Assurance (BMQA) and the Psychology Examining Committee (PEC). He has also litigated cases in the following counties: San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Contra Costa, Sacramento, Lake, Los Angeles, Riverside and Humboldt. He has personally tried to verdict at least 30 jury trials as well as 15 court trials to judgment. A number of the jury trials were lengthy, including several spanning a number of months. Between 1994 and 1997, Mr. Watters was in trial more than 100 days in 10 cases in the following areas: family law, personal injury, business litigation, employment discrimination (2), bankruptcy, malicious prosecution, and legal malpractice. In each case, the firm's clients prevailed except for the one day bankruptcy trial. More recently, in 2002, he was in trial for 20 days on three cases including business litigation (fraud in sale of a business) and two family law matters (setting aside a 14-year-old judgment based on duress and defeating a premarital agreement). In his insurance defense practice he has lost only one jury trial in his career.

He has represented clients in successful arbitrations in such cases as alleged fraud in the sale of a restaurant and the defense of a managing member of an LLC in an attempt to force him out. Mr. Watters has also handled numerous appeals (most of which were not certified for publication) and has a number of reported appellate decisions, including *Wartb v. Department of Justice* (1979) 595 F.2d 521, 50 A.L.R. Fed. 331 (Freedom of Information Act); *Mill Valley Refuse v. Superior Court* (1980) 108 Cal.App.3d 707 (indemnity from late settling co-defendant prior to judgment / CCP § 877); *Butler v. Hathcoat* (1983) 146 Cal.App.3d 834 (five year statute); *Gregori v. Bank of America* (1989) 207 Cal.App.3d 291 (attorney disqualification); *Flatt v. Superior Court* (1994) 9 C.4th 275 (consultant to petitioner) (attorney's duty to existing client); and *Hall v. Harker* (1999) 69 Cal.App.4th 836 (judicial misconduct during trial/malicious prosecution).

Mr. Watters is a member of the Defense Research Institute (DRI). He is a past Chairman of the Board of Directors of United Way of Sonoma-Mendocino-Lake (1993) and was its General Campaign Chairman (1990). He is a member of the local Salvation Army Advisory Board. He is on the faculty of Empire College School of Law and was also a Professor of Law (Torts) (1990-1992). Mr. Watters attended the United States Naval War College *Current Strategy Forum* on "The Strategic Dilemmas of Global Leadership: The United States, Maritime Power, and the Future International Security Environment" in Newport, Rhode Island in June 2004.